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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION, REFERENDUM; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussion on the Constitution and Referendum were the major editorial themes of the daily newspapers on October 18, 2005. END SUMMARY.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [1A.](#) "The Referendum Experience" (Al-Dustoor, 10/18)
- [1B.](#) "The Referendum" (Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed, 10/18)
- [1C.](#) "National Unity Conference... National Dialogue Conference" (Baghdad, 10/18)
- [1D.](#) "The Right Step to Establish Democracy: Resorting to Ballot Boxes" (Al-Ittihad, 10/18)
- [1E.](#) "The Constitution Prevails" (Al-Dawa, 10/18)
- [1F.](#) "Predictions and Unique Truths" (Al-Adala, 10/18)

SELECTED COMMENTARIES

[1A.](#) "The Referendum Experience"
(Al-Dustoor, no bias, independent, published this front-page editorial by Bassim Al-Sheikh)

"The referendum process represents a victory for democracy whether the result is positive or negative. We will feel satisfied not because of the results, but because we can deal with the situation in a tolerant manner, like civilized people. The draft constitution may fail, but what is more important is that everyone now has the motivation to seek representation in the next parliament, which means that important groups are aware that the channels of dialogue and participation in the political process are more effective than all the world's weapons.

"It is a new beginning for those who have opposing opinions towards the changes in Iraq-they are trying to reconstitute their ideology in a different way; they need to move away from negative opinions and develop effective and positive ideologies."

[1B.](#) "The Referendum"
(Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed, independent, pro-coalition, published this front-page editorial by Ismael Zair)

"The situation is the same no matter what the results of the referendum are because the most important thing is that millions of Iraqis went to the ballot boxes to express their opinions freely and without fear. Whatever the result, it will never change this fact. No one can take away this honor from Iraqis; they are honorable people because of their courage and their commitment to constitutional rights.

"There are some facts that have resulted from this referendum day; one of them is the rebuke of Iraq's enemies who have attempted to raise the specter of civil war. No one has the right to interfere with a great people like the Iraqis, because no one understands or really knows the interests of our people better than us. "

[1C.](#) "National Unity Conference... National Dialogue Conference"
(Baghdad, affiliated with the Iraqi National Accord led by Iyad Allawi, published this second--page editorial by Hussain Omran)

"Under the auspices of the Iraqi National Accord, hundreds of local, Arab and international participants met yesterday to discuss the truth and to reinforce national unity and the rights and duties of citizens.

"Delegations from throughout Iraq responded to Mr. Iyad Allawi's call for the conference to discuss: the vital needs of the Iraqi people, the deterioration of security and life in Iraq, and the impotence of citizen rights that must be respected by the government.

"They all came to ensure their support for national unity in Iraq and to back the call of the National Accord. They will talk about their goals and objectives, which focus on our

bright-unified Iraq, and with national unity we will rebuild our Iraqi economy, and fulfill Iraqi's dreams of freedom and democracy. National unity is one of the Accord's main aims. Let us unite our efforts for the benefit of our great Iraq."

D. "The Right Step to Establish Democracy: Resorting to Ballot Boxes"

(Al-Ittihad, pro-coalition, affiliated with the PUK led by Jalal Talabani, published this page-three editorial by Abdul Hadi Mehdi)

"Regardless of results emerging from the constitutional referendum, those supporting the 'Yes' or 'No' vote will accept the results determined by ballot boxes and Iraqis will again prove to the world that despite all critical circumstances, they all contributed to define their country's future, and reflected this through their participation in the referendum. The wide range of Iraqi participation in this process has confirmed the unity of Iraqis under the severest circumstances; engaging through a peaceful struggle that guarantees an opportunity for each citizen to participate in the democratic process.

"So regardless of the final result, the language of ballot boxes has prevailed over that of weapons, threats, and intimidation. These are the rights steps to be taken on the path towards a democracy that was nowhere to found on the Iraqi scene for many decades, and it is a message sent out to those opposing participation in the new Iraq, making clear that this is the only acceptable way for Iraqis and reinforcing that the era of oppression is over and that it will not return.

"Within less than a year Iraqis were able to record two epics, the first was the January 30 elections where Iraqis took part despite security threats and difficulties--the will of Iraqis to rebuild their country formed the basis on which the success of the elections was built.

"The other epic came on referendum day on Oct. 15, 2005 when Iraqis participated in another patriotic battle where no incidents affected the process or its outcome. The two 'Yes' and 'No' teams will accept the results because it represents the outcome of a democratic process Iraqis are trying to maintain. This courageous and responsible stance demonstrated by Iraqis has gained them the respect the world's nations, and established an example to follow."

E. "The Constitution Prevails"

(Al-Dawa, affiliated with Al-Dawa party led by Al-Anzi, published this page-two editorial by Jasim Al-Sayid)

"Regardless of the obstacles enemies have placed along the path to democracy (especially those with permanent seats on despicable Arab satellite news channels who glorify everything that brings harm to the Iraqi people) and in spite of the artillery professionals targeting us, regardless of all this. Iraqis have freely had their say rejecting slavery and the division of their country (formerly oppressed by tyrants) and rebuking those whose hands are stained with Iraqi blood. We have endorsed the constitution, rule of law, human and women's rights, and everything new that will serve Iraq.

"Iraqis set out on the glorious dawn of Oct. 15, 2005, to mark a day remembered in this country by coming generations, to approve the constitution written with pride and defiance of those seeking endless power who were unable to stop the people from marching towards ballot boxes despite threats and explosions, and despite the daily scenes of blood and violence claiming lives of women, children, and the elderly from a variety of different religious and sectarian backgrounds.

"People marched towards the one common goal of making the democratic process a success; even those voting 'no' have exercised their right to express their opinion. The main thing is that Iraqis have agreed to participate in the political process, renounce all forms of violent struggle, and instead resort to logic, negotiation, and persuasion. The will of the people has prevailed and foiled the attempts of those involved in disgraceful bargains. There remains only one step to be taken within the next two months; Iraqis will embark on new elections at the end of the year to conclude a new stage in Iraq that will set an example for the region and the whole world."

F. "Predictions and Unique Truths"

(Al-Adala, affiliated with SCIRI led by Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, published this page-three column by Dr. Ali Khalif)

"All media outlets are talking about voting percentages among Iraqi provinces for the referendum on the draft constitution. Nothing is sure until the IECI announces results of the referendum--initially through preliminary results followed by final results. Several media outlets

claim that they represent the Iraqi media but I suspect they represent Ba'ath party institutions and are trying to broadcast poisoned news about the referendum results. If Iraqis in western provinces voted `yes' to the constitution it's the truth because they are tired of terrorism and terrorists using their land to conduct operations-if that's the case it will be the unique truth that Iraqis want a better future and a secure Iraq.

"There are those who swore that majority in western Iraq would vote `no' to the constitution and others who confirmed that a big surprise was coming from Al-Anbar and Mosul. The TAL states that two-thirds of Iraqi provinces can reject the constitution therefore UIA (United Iraqi Alliance) members protested the article and declared their reservations to the anti-democratic article.

"The fact is, Iraqis voted `yes' to the constitution, even those who live in western areas in Iraq--they all said yes to the constitution. Iraqis are looking forward and working hard to achieve their goals, they are determined to make the political process succeed and defeat terrorism in Iraq. The unique truth we are censoring here is that terrorism was defeated and Iraq will soon become more secure."

KHALILZAD